

Message Text

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12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4856

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB PINT PO

SUBJ: LABOR SITUATION IN PORTUGAL

SUMMARY: MAJOR ISSUE IN LABOR AREA IS WHETHER THE FORTH-
COMING DECREE LAW GOVERNING LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WILL CALL FOR
ONE UNITARY LABOR CONFEDERATION OR PERMIT THE FREE FORMATION
OF LABOR GROUPINGS. THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN
ABLE TO AGREE ON THIS ISSUE AND THE OUTCOME REMAINS IN DOUBT.
THE PRESENT LABOR GROUPING MOST CLOSELY APPROXIMATING A CON-
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FEDERATION - INTERSINDICAL - IS DOMINATED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

SHOULD A UNITARY LABOR MOVEMENT BE DECREED INTERSINDICAL WOULD RECEIVE A MAJOR BOOST. COMMUNIST CONTROL OF INTERSINDICAL IS BELIEVED DUE TO ADROIT MANEUVERING AND IS NOT A REFLECTION OF THEIR TRU NUMBERS AMONG PORTUGUESE WORKERS. SUBSTANTIAL NON-COMMUNIST LABOR ELEMENTS EXIST BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT INTER-SINDICAL. EVEN IF THE FORTHCOMING LAW SHOULD PERMIT THE FORMATION OF PLURALISTIC LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, SOME NON-COMMUNIST LABOR LEADERS ARE SEEMINGLY UNCERTAIN AS TO WHETHER THEY MIGHT DO BETTER BY ATTEMPTING TO CAPTURE INTERSINDICAL FROM WITHIN OR BY ORGANIZING A COMPETING CONFEDERATION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOLLOWING IS BASED LARGELY ON THE VIEWS OF MANUEL SIMON, RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE IN LISBON FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU) DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT SIMON'S VIEWS ARE AN OBJECTIVE STATEMENT OF THE SITUATION.

2. THE PROGRAM OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT CALLS FOR DECREE LAWS GOVERNING THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF TRADE UNIONS AND REGULATING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PRACTICES. A DRAFT DECREE LAW ON UNION ORGANIZATION IS AWAITING FORMAL DISCUSSION IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS BUT ITS CONSIDERATION HAS BEEN POSTPONED SEVERAL TIMES. THE ISSUE WHICH THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS APPARENTLY UNABLE TO RESOLVE IS WHETHER THE LAW SHOULD CALL FOR ONE UNITARY LABOR CONFEDERATION ENCOMPASSING ALL OF ORGANIZED LABOR, OR WHETHER THE LAW SHOULD PERMIT THE FREE FORMATION OF LABOR UNIONS, FEDERATIONS, AND CONFEDERATIONS AS DETERMINED BY CIRCUMSTANCES. THE COMMUNIST PARTY, TOGETHER WITH ITS VARIOUS FRONT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE LABOR GROUPS IT CONTROLS, IS PUSHING HARD FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S DECREE LAW TO EVOKE ONE UNITARY CONFEDERATION. IN CONTRAST, THE SOCIALISTS, PPD, AND OTHER NON-COMMUNIST POLITICAL GROUPS ARE STRONGLY URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO PERMIT A PLURALISTIC LABOR MOVEMENT.

3. THE DRAFT DECREE LAW PRESENTLY AWAITING CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WAS PREPARED BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOR WHEN IT WAS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE PREVIOUS MINISTER, A COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER. ALTHOUGH THE ORIGINAL DRAFT HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC IT IS REPORTEDLY A POORLY WRITTEN DOCUMENT WITH A NUMBER OF INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS. HOWEVER, ONE SECTION OF THE

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ORIGINAL DRAFT DOES SPEAK CLEARLY OF "THE CONFEDERATION". IF THE LAW IS PROMULGATED WITH THIS WORDING, THE COMMUNISTS WILL CONTEND THAT THIS REPRESENTS A CALL FOR A UNITARY LABOR ORGANIZATION AND MOST PORTUGUESE WORKERS WOULD PROBABLY ACQUIESCE WITH SUCH AN INTERPRETATION. THE FINAL FORM IS WHICH THE LAW IS PROMULGATED WILL BE AN IMPORTANT INDICATION OF THE POLITICAL TREND OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND DO MUCH TO DETERMINE THE INITIAL ORIENTATION OF THE ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT.

4. INTERSINDICAL IS PRESENTLY THE ORGANIZATION WHICH MOST CLOSELY APPROXIMATES A LABOR CONFEDERATION IN PORTUGAL. IT IS HEADED BY AN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF 36 MEMBERS OF WHOM 27 ARE REPUTEDLY COMMUNISTS. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IS CURRENTLY MADE UP OF THREE REPRESENTATIVES (LARGELY SELF-DESIGNATED) FROM EACH OF TWELVE SELF-DESIGNATED UNIONS, MOSTLY ORGANIZATIONS HAVING THEIR MEMBERSHIP EXCLUSIVELY IN THE LISBON AREA. INTERSINDICAL CLAIMS AFFILIATION OF 240 UNIONS BUT ONLY 78 UNIONS ARE RECOGNIZED TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION IN INTER-SINDICAL PLENARY SESSIONS. PLENARY SESSIONS HAVE ONLY AN ADVISORY FUNCTION AND CANNOT OVERRULE THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, THUS FACILITATING COMMUNIST PARTY CONTROL.

5. SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL IS STARTING WITH AN ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF ORGANIZATION, EXPERIENCED LEADERSHIP, AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING TRADITION. LOCAL OCCUPATIONALLY-BASED LABOR ORGANIZATIONS EXIST PRIMARILY IN LISBON AND IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED AREA SURROUNDING OPORTO BUT THERE IS A NEAR TOTAL LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL UNIONS AND NO EFFECTIVE FEDERATIONS UNITING SIMILAR UNIONS. UNIONS VARY WIDELY IN SCOPE OF OCCUPATIONS THEY REPRESENT AND IN NUMBERS OF MEMBERS.

6. SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT'S DECREE LAW CALL FOR A UNITARY LABOR MOVEMENT, INTERSINDICAL WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BECOME THE DESIGNATED LABOR CONFEDERATION. HOWEVER, SOME NON-COMMUNIST LABOR LEADERS ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT INTERSINDICAL IS IRREPARABLY LOST TO COMMUNIST DOMINATION AND ARE CONSIDERING WHETHER IT COULD BE CAPTURED BY NON-COMMUNIST LABOR. AT INTERSINDICAL'S LAST PLENARY SESSION, HELD OCTOBER 13, MOTIONS SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNISTS WON BY VOTES OF 40 TO 20 AND 40 TO 14, INDICATING THAT SIGNIFICANT NON-COMMUNIST OPINION EXISTS WITHIN THE

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ORGANIZATION. ALSO, IN A SEPARATE MEETING HELD THIS WEEK, A GROUP FORMERLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE CHURCH-RELATED YOUNG CATHOLIC WORKERS (JOC) DECIDED TO REMAIN WITHIN INTERSINDICAL IN ORDER TO WORK FOR A MORE REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATION BY ENCOURAGING OTHER NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS TO AFFILIATE. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS WITH POTENTIAL FOR LEADERSHIP, E.G., SINDICATO DO MAR, WHICH PRESENTLY REFUSES ALL TIES WITH INTERSINDICAL.

7. THE COMMUNISTS INSISTENCE ON A UNITARY LABOR MOVEMENT IS BELIEVED TO BE A REFLECTION OF THEIR CONCERN THAT THEY MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL LABOR UNIONS AND FEDERATIONS WHICH DEVELOPED AS A RESULT OF A NATURAL GROWTH OF ORGANIZED LABOR IN PORTUGAL. BY INSTITUTIONALIZING INTERSINDICAL AS THE LABOR CONFEDERATION IN PORTUGAL THEY WOULD HOPE TO CAPITALIZE UPON THEIR PRESENT

SELF-DESIGNATED CONTROL OF THIS ORGANIZATION TO INFLUENCE THE
MASS OF MON-POLITIZED WORKERS. THE ISSUE IS OBVIOUSLY ONE
WHICH THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT IS HANDLING WITH CARE. TO
DECIDE IN FAVOR OF A PLURALISTIC MOVEMENT IS TO RISK LOSING
PRESENT COMMUNIST SUPPORT IN KEEPING LABOR AGITATION QUIESCENT.
TO DECIDE IN FAVOR OF A UNITARY MOVEMENT RISKS HANDING OOVER TO
THE COMMUNISTS EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY'S LABOR CON-
FEDERATION AT A TIME WHEN PORTUGAL IS GOING THROUGH A CRITICAL
ELECTORAL PERIOD.

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